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When winter snow hits, Murfreesboro Street and Sign Department is at the ready

MURFREESBORO, Tenn. – When Old Man Winter strikes Murfreesboro with a blow of snow and ice, the dedicated employees of the city's Street and Sign Department are prepared to go into action.

"When we get a warning that a winter storm is developing (he and his team monitor the weather at all times), Street and Sign Department Director Rick Templeton said, "we start planning."

The city is divided into six winter storm routes, with the major arterial and collector streets identified, Templeton said, a truck with a driver and operator are assigned to each route. The Street Department has additional trucks, salt spreaders, and plows that can be use if the need arises.

Each team also has at its disposal a written description of the assigned routes that include the streets, hills, bridges and intersections are located. The teams are also furnished a map of their specific sector.

The department is normally divided into two storm response teams that work rotating eight hour shifts until the effects of the storm have been mitigated. After monitoring weather patterns and it is apparent that a major storm will develop, the department will load the trucks with salt, put tarpaulins over the beds and warehouse them "out of the weather" in the Street and Sign Department garages.

In the event of a major winter storm, he said, the city has a contract with Rollins Excavating to bring in extra equipment such as motor graders and backhoes to assist in the mitigation process.

If light precipitation is expected or there is enough time before a blizzard occurs, he said, a light coating of salt may be spread over the problem spots in each sector to offset the effects of freezing rain and sleet.

A large salt storage facility located at the city's public works facility on Florence Road houses approximately 1,500 tons which he considers adequate for the average winter, he said, and the city is under contract with a salt vendor to bring more, if necessary.

"We also maintain a satellite salt storage facility at the Street and Sign Department location at 620 W. Main St.," he added, "because we want them (trucks) to go to the closest facility for reloading.

The West Main Street facility is restocked from the Florence Road site continually throughout the duration of each storm.

Freezing rain and sleet can be a difficult situation to deal with in the event it builds up on trees and limbs. This can result in streets being blocked by the damage to the trees and

limbs. In this situation the department must develop priorities in regard to the debris clearing process versus the snow removal process.

“Every storm is different,” Templeton said, adding that these differences are the main reasons it’s difficult to develop a clear plan of attack. Each storm dictates the manner in which it will be addressed based on the conditions.

Templeton maintains three basic plans for the mitigation of winter storms and they are:

- (1) **Minor Winter Storm;** salting is limited to bridges, overpasses, major intersection, and accesses to emergency areas, such as hospitals, police departments, and fire departments.
- (2) **Medium Winter Storm;** salting is applied to all major collect and arterial streets, bridges, overpasses, hills on secondary streets, and all other areas included in a minor storm.
- (3) **Major Winter Storm;** Salt is applied to all areas included in a medium winter storm and plowing is initiated as necessary. Private contracting is implemented as needed.

The city clears all state and federal highways within the limits of the city of Murfreesboro through an annual TDOT state maintenance contract, he said. The Tennessee Department of Transportation reimburses the city for all labor, time, materials and equipment used.

When the really big snow, ice or sleet storm hits Murfreesboro, the city’s Street and Sign Department employees have a passion for what they do and will be ready to keep the streets clear and local drivers safe.